Amendments to the Claims

Please amend claims 1, 7-9, 11, and 12 as shown below.

1. (Currently amended) An isolated polynucleotide encoding a root growth regulating polypeptide, wherein the polypeptide ~~comprising an~~ comprises the amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 2 or ~~an~~ the amino acid sequence with at least 90% sequence homology to SEQ ID NO: 2.

2. (Original) The polynucleotide of claim 1, having the nucleic acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 1.

3. (Original) The polynucleotide of claim 1, having a root-specific expression pattern.

4. (Original) A recombinant vector comprising the polynucleotide of claim 1.

5. (Original) A cell comprising the polynucleotide of claim 1.

6. (Original) A plant comprising the polynucleotide of claim 1.

7. (Currently amended) A plant tissue or seed ~~derived from the plant of claim 6~~ comprising the polynucleotide of claim 1.

8. (Currently amended) A method for enhancing root growth of a plant, comprising the ~~step~~ steps of:

i) introducing the polynucleotide of claim 1 into ~~the~~ a plant cell to obtain a transformed plant cell, wherein the polynucleotide is operably linked to an expression control sequence;

ii) producing a plant from said transformed plant cell; and

iii) selecting a plant exhibiting rapid root growth compared to a plant which was not introduced with the polynucleotide under neutral and acidic conditions.

9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 8, wherein the plant cell is selected from the group consisting of protoplasts, gamete producing cells and cells ~~with~~ which regenerate into a whole plant.

10. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the plant cell is monocotyledon or dicotyledon.

11. (Currently amended) A method for enhancing resistance in a plant to obstacle-touching stress, comprising the ~~step~~ steps of:

i) introducing ~~a~~ the polynucleotide of claim 1 into ~~the~~ a plant cell to obtain a transformed plant cell, wherein the polynucleotide is operably linked to an expression control sequence;

ii) producing a plant from said transformed plant cell; and

iii) selecting a plant exhibiting rapid root growth compared to a plant which was not introduced with the polynucleotide under obstacle-touching stress, wherein the plant exhibiting rapid root growth indicates that the plant has enhanced resistance to obstacle-touching stress.

12. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 11, wherein the plant cell is selected from the group consisting of protoplasts, gamete producing cells and cells ~~with~~ which regenerate into a whole plant.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the plant cell is monocotyledon or dicotyledon.

14. (Withdrawn) A method for identifying a compound affecting the activity or expression of the polynucleotide of claim 1, comprising the steps of:

i) contacting a recombinant cell expressing the polynucleotide of claim 1 with a candidate material; and

ii) measuring an effect on the activity or expression of the polynucleotide.

15. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 14, wherein the compound enhances the activity or expression of the polynucleotide of claim 1.

16. (Withdrawn) An isolated polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide, wherein the polypeptide hybridizes to the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1 or its complement, under high stringency conditions.